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A NEW ARGYTHAMNIA FROM TEXAS

Victor L. Cory

I recall with pleasure a field trip made in June of 1935 with Dr. P. A. Munz, then of Pomona College, Claremont, California. Dr. Munz and his family were traveling overland from California en route to the Gray Herbarium, and we planned a field trip to San Antonio from my headquarters at the Ranch Experiment Station situated midway between the towns of Sonora and Rocksprings in the central portion of the Edwards Plateau. At San Antonio we would visit my co-worker, Mr. H. B. Parks of the State Apicultural Laboratory, and have him join us and lead us on a field trip to the Carrizo Sands and to Sutherland Springs in Wilson County. On this trip, we took occasion, also, to visit for the first time the Mustang Desert, which covers much of Atascosa, Frio, La Salle, McMullen, Dimmit and Zavala counties. It is a great rolling plain covered with cacti, low brush and large areas of salt plant (*Varilla texana*), the latter plant having attracted, in the past, hundreds of wild horses, mustangs, to this desert-like country. The animals were said to be the wild descendants of Spanish horses augmented by strays from Fort Ewell. A writer in 1850 tells of the young men of the country having an annual spring hunt to capture good colts for riding animals, and, as late as 1880, settlers along the edge of the desert reported small herds of wild horses. The Spanish Trail came into the Mustang Desert from the west and about the middle turned north to San Antonio. In 1935 the road between Cotulla and Fowlerton, La Salle County, passed three or four miles south of Los Angeles, a village situated outside the Mustang Desert and directly north of its western edge. This old road was closed a few years later, when a new state highway was made which passes through Los Angeles and skirts the northern side of the Mustang Desert. Going east and at three miles inside this area, which is carpeted with curly mesquite grass (*Hilaria Belangeri*), some interesting plants were collected. Two of them we were unfamiliar with: *Varilla texana* A. Gray and *Jatropha cathartica* (Berl.) Jtn., the latter having a large, fleshy, almost globose rootstock and attractive pink flowers. In digging out the rootstocks, the pick would almost bounce back when struck into the hard, dry, adobe soil, much as if struck against concrete.

The following plant, new to us, was also new to science.

Argythamnia argyraea sp. nov. Caulibus pluribus e radice perenni, gracilibus, teretibus, 25–35 cm. altis, plerumque 1–2 mm. crassis, indumento brevi argenteo; foliis alternis, integris, basis 3-nervis, ellipticis ovatibusve, utrinque indumento brevi argenteis, ad 4 cm. longis, plerumque 5–8 mm. latis; floribus dioecis; floribus pistillatis axillaribus, solitariis, pedunculatis; pedunculis quam folio brevioribus, 2-bracteolis ca. 1–2 mm. ad calycem impositis, pro ratione crassis, 5–8 mm. longis; petalis 5, ca. 0.5 mm. latis, 2 mm. longis, acutis, costis prominente; sepalis 5, ovato-lanceolatis, ad 4 mm. longis, 2 mm. latis, intus minus dense, extus dense argenteo-pubescentibus, basi saepe viridibus glabratisve; ovario stylisque conferte brevi-villosis; capsulis profunde 3-lobis, conferte argenteo-tomentosis, ca. 5 mm. latis, 3 mm. longis; seminibus immaturis.

Stems many from a root crown, terete, slender, 25–35 cm. tall, mostly 1–2 mm. in diameter, silvery with short appressed hairs; leaves alternate, entire, 3-nerved at the bases, elliptic to ovate, silvery on both surfaces with short appressed hairs, up to 4 cm. long and mostly 5–8 mm. broad; flowers dioecious, but only fruiting specimens collected; pistillate flowers axillary, solitary, pedunculate; peduncle shorter than subtending leaf, with two bracteoles 1–2 mm. below the calyx, relatively stout, 5–8 mm. long; pistillate flowers with 5 petals, these about 0.5 mm. broad and 2 mm. long, acute, midvein prominent; sepals 5, ovate-lanceolate, up to 4 mm. long and less than half as broad, outer surface densely silvery-pubescent, the inner surface less densely so, with the basal portion frequently green and glabrate; ovary and styles densely short-villous; capsules deeply 3-lobed, densely silvery-pubescent, about 5 mm. broad and 3 mm. long; seeds immature.

Type. Near western and northern edges of Mustang Desert, nineteen miles east of Cotulla, La Salle County, Texas, June 23, 1935, *Cory 14972* (Gray Herbarium).

This species resembles *Argythamnia aphoroides* in being dioecious, but it differs from that species in its silvery pubescence, its narrower leaves, and in its smaller fruits and seeds.

I am indebted to Dr. I. M. Johnston of the Arnold Arboretum for calling to my attention the fact that this plant was undescribed, and also for suggesting the very appropriate specific name; and to Dr. Leon Croizat for checking my material as well as for valuable assistance in preparation of the Latin description. I am grateful to Mr. H. B. Parks for visiting the type locality on June 30, 1937, to collect ample material for further study, and for information concerning the Mustang Desert. The plant is still to be collected when the seeds are mature.

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